

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
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AMEMBASSY RANGOON

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TAGS: ETRA, IN

SUBJECT: NBC PROGRAM ON INDIA MONKEY EXPORT BAN

REF: STATE 046015

1. NBC PRESENTED 15-MINUTE REPORT ON INDIA'S MONKEY EXPORT
BAN ENTITLED "THE RHESUS CRISIS" AS PART OF ITS "WEEKEND"
SHOW AT 11:30 P.M. SATURDAY NIGHT, APRIL 1 ("WEEKEND" IS
RELATIVELY NEW SHOW ON NBC AND FOLLOWS FORMAT OF CBS'S
"60 MINUTES.") FOLLOWING IS SCENARIO OF THIS REPORT; THIS
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IS NOT RPT NOT A TRANSCRIPT, AND STATEMENTS OF INDIVIDUALS
REPRESENT GIST OF WHAT THEY SAID AND ARE NOT RPT NOT DIRECT
QUOTATIONS.

2. SEGMENT BEGINS WITH NARRATOR'S STATEMENT, "INDIA HAS
BANNED THE EXPORT OF RHESUS MONKEYS, SO THERE MAY NOT BE
ANY POLIO VACCINE NEXT YEAR." REPORTER IN NEW DELHI,

PHOTOGRAPHED IN AREA SHOWING NUMEROUS RHESUS MONKEYS SCAMPERING ABOUT, SAYS "HERE IN NEW DELHI, RHESUS MONKEYS SEEM ALMOST AS NUMEROUS AS PIGEONS IN NEW YORK. BUT IN OTHER COUNTRIES THEIR POPULATION HAS ALMOST BEEN WIPED OUT. THIS IS BECAUSE THE RHESUS MONKEY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PRIMATE IN A WIDE RANGE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH. INDIA'S BAN ON THE EXPORT OF THESE MONKEYS, WHICH BEGINS TODAY, APRIL 1,

WILL CAUSE GRAVE PROBLEMS. UNLESS A SUBSTITUTE IS FOUND, THERE WILL BE NO MORE POLIO VACCINE."

3. CHARLES SOUTHWICK OF JOHNS HOPKINS THEN SAYS ON CAMERA, "WE SHOULD EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE TO THE RHESUS MONKEY BECAUSE OF THE CONTRIBUTION IT HAS MADE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLIO AND MEASLES VACCINES AND TO OTHER MEDICAL RESEARCH." JOE HELD OF NIH IS INTERVIEWED AND SAYS THAT "THE RHESUS MONKEY HAS LONG BEEN THE MODEL FOR DETERMINING WHAT MEDICINES ARE SAFE."

4. NARRATOR RETURNS TO INDIA TO EXPLAIN THE MONKEY'S IMPORTANCE AS RELIGIOUS SYMBOL. NUMEROUS SHOTS OF HANUMAN, STATUES OF MONKEYS IN TEMPLES, ETC. ARE SHOWN. NARRATOR SAYS, "TO THE HINDUS, THE MONKEY IS A SYMBOL OF THEIR CULTURE, HISTORY, AND RELIGION," AND THEN EXPLAINS THE STORY OF HANUMAN. HE THEN QUALIFIES THIS: "BUT IN INDIA, AT LEAST FIVE MAJOR INDIAN INSTITUTES USE ABOUT 2,000 UNCLASSIFIED

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MONKEYS A YEAR, PRIMARILY IN BIRTH CONTROL RESEARCH. BUT WHILE THIS MIGHT BE ACCEPTED IN THE CITIES, IN THE RURAL AREAS THE MONEKY IS STILL VENERATED." DR. JAMES VICKERS OF THE FDA THEN DESCRIBES THE TIME HE WAS PHYSICALLY ATTACKED BY VILLAGERS WHEN HE WENT ON MONKEY-TRAPPING EXPEDITION; HE SAYS VILLAGERS REGARD TAKING THESE MONKEYS AS A "MORAL SIN."

5. NARRATOR EXPLAINS THAT INDIA BANNED EXPORTS IN THE EARLY 1950'S AND ALLOWED THEM TO RESUME IN 1955 WITH RESTRICTIONS ON THEIR USE AND NUMBERS. HE SAYS IN 1974 THE GOI RESTRICTED EXPORTS TO 20,000 MONKEYS A YEAR, OF WHICH 12,000 WENT TO U.S.

6. NARRATOR ASKS, "IF U.S. CANNOT GET MONKEYS FROM INDIA, WHERE CAN WE GET THEM FROM?" SCENE SWITCHES TO FLORIDA, AND NARRATOR EXPLAINS, "THIS IS ONE OF EIGHT U.S. BREEDING COLONIES. BUT GOVERNMENT EXPERTS ESTIMATE IT WILL TAKE TWENTY YEARS TO PRODUCE ENOUGH MONKEYS TO MEET U.S. NEEDS. HEW WILL ASK FOR A BUDGET INCREASE, BUT THERE STILL WILL BE A SHORTAGE FOR SOME YEARS. SCIENTISTS THEREFORE FEAR THAT THEIR RESEARCH PROJECTS -- AND WE -- WILL SUFFER."

JOE HELD OF NIH SAYS, "THERE ARE ENOUGH MONKEYS FOR THE REST OF THIS YEAR FOR TESTING POLIO VACCINE, BUT NOT FOR OTHER PURPOSES."

7. NARRATOR EXPLAINS, "EVEN THOUGH THE BAN STARTS TODAY, THERE ALREADY IS A SHORTAGE. THERE IS A SHORTAGE BECAUSE WE VIOLATED AN AGREEMENT WITH INDIA ABOUT HOW THESE MONKEYS CAN BE USED." BEN BLOOD OF NIH EXPLAINS, "THERE WERE NUMEROUS REPORTS IN THE INDIAN PRESS ABOUT HOW THESE

MONKEYS HAVE BEEN USED IN THE U.S., AND THESE PRESS ARTICLES WERE THE FORERUNNER TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE BAN A FEW DAYS LATER." NARRATOR THEN EXPLAINS THE NIH CERTIFICATION PROCESS AND SAYS, "THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT UNCLASSIFIED

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MAY HAVE BROKEN THE AGREEMENT, BUT LT. COLONEL STILL OF DOD SAYS HE THOUGHT WHAT THEY DID WAS ACCEPTABLE." LTC STILL SAYS ON CAMERA, "THE AGREEMENT SPECIFIED THAT MONKEYS COULD NOT BE USED IN ATOMIC BLAST OR SPACE EXPERIMENTS. WE BELIEVE WHAT WE DID WAS WITHIN THE BROAD VIEW OF MEDICAL RESEARCH." THE NARRATOR SAYS, HOWEVER, "THAT NIH STOPPED THESE DEFENSE EXPERIMENTS AND THEREBY AGREED WITH THE INDIAN POSITION." LTC STILL THEN SAYS, "I MUST ADMIT THAT THE PRIMARY INTENT OF OUR RESEARCH WAS TO DETERMINE THE EFFECT THAT RADIATION FROM AN ATOMIC EXPLOSION WOULD HAVE ON MAN." PROGRAM THEN SHOWED FILMS OF THE AFRRRI EXPERIMENTS, WITH A MONKEY ON TREADMILL BEING EXPOSED TO RADIATION UNTIL IT DIED.

8. NARRATOR GOES ON, "RHESUS MONKEYS DIED BY THE THOUSANDS IN THE 1950'S TO HELP FIND A CURE FOR POLIO. BACK THEN, THERE WERE 18,000 CASES OF POLIO A YEAR, BUT LAST YEAR THERE WERE ONLY EIGHT. EIGHT MILLION CHILDREN TAKE POLIO VACCINE EVERY YEAR." MEDICAL RESEARCH SCIENTIST AT LEDERLE, THE ONLY U.S. PRODUCER OF POLIO VACCINE, EXPLAINS, "WE HAVE ENOUGH MONKEYS TO COMPLETE TESTING ON OUR 1978 PRODUCTION, BUT WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TEST ANY VACCINE IN 1979. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? UNLESS THE GOVERNMENT TEST METHOD IS CHANGED, THERE WILL BE NO SAFETY EVALUATION OF THE VACCINE; SO THERE WILL BE NO TREATMENT OF CHILDREN AGAINST POLIO. THERE WILL BE MANY CRIPPLED CHILDREN, AND EVEN DEATHS." CHRISTOPHER

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